Wanted Insights

100 Professionals Took LSD Dosage

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By Alice Bonner
Washington Post Staff Writer

About 100 professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, physicians and theologians have voluntarily taken LSD at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center in Catonsville during the last five years, the center's superintendent said yesterday.

The professionals took the drug to gain first-hand experience with the effects to assist them in their work, according to the research center's superintendent, Dr. Albert A. Kurland.

Unlike several LSD studies revealed recently in which military and CIA researchers administered the mind-altering drug to both volunteers and unsuspecting subjects, the Maryland center's experiments have been reported in publications such as the Journal of the American Medical Association, Kurland said.

The professional volunteers, from universities and clinical facilities throughout the country, wanted to learn the procedure for administering the drug and to add personal experience to their "familiarity (with LSD) through technical literature," Kurland said.

Kurland said the center benefited from the experiments by "getting the perception (of LSD) as observed through (their) professional background," and by the opportunity to maintain follow-up studies.

The center is located on the grounds of Spring Grove State Hospital. LSD has long been used at the hospital, along with psychotherapy, in treating alcoholics, drug addicts and the chronically ill since 1965, a fact that was previously known. The research on the effects of the LSD on the professionals was fully authorized by federal and state governmental regulating agencies, according to Kurland. One such agency was the Food and Drug Administration.

Kurland said patients and professionals were treated identically in the drug tests. Informed consent was required from both patients and professionals, and all available knowledge related to the "drug's effects was given to the testing participants.

The drug was given in a liquid form by medical teams who monitored the recipients throughout the eight-to-12-hour experience. Most of the 100 volunteers received only one dose, while a few had up to three doses over an 18-month period, at six-month intervals, Kurland said.

Data from the studies on professionals have not been completely analyzed, Kurland said However, none of the experiments "produced any effects we would consider deleterious or negative," he said.

Of the estimated 300 patients, many of them cancer victims, who have been treated with LSD at the center, about one-third showed "marked improvement," one-third exhibited no response and the rest exhibited indefinite responses, the superintendent said.